Thoreau Calendar

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A THOREAU CALENDAR

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EDITED BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

THERE are few writings in English literature which surpass the pages of Thoreau for uniqueness and variety of theme and sententious phrasing. As he had a strong, distinctive personality, so his literary expressions were original and forceful. His books contain many nuggets of study and experience on Nature, economics, books, ethics, religion, and a score of other topics. Sometimes the tone is that of blunt practicality; in other passages, the spiritual or poetic note prevails. It has always been difficult to classify Thoreau's writings because of their variety of subject and lack of coherent plan; he said frankly, "It is wise to write on many themes, that so you may find the right and inspiring one." Thoreau is associated in memory with the Transcendentalist movement of his time and community, and three of the leading exponents of this philosophy, in America, were his friends and neighbors, — Emerson, Alcott, and Ellery Channing. While Thoreau was philosophic by nature, he did not invent nor accept any definite theory or program of living for mankind

in general. He was as pronounced in nonconformity as Emerson, and almost as mystical in certain moods as Alcott, and he preached the "gospel of the simple life" with as much vigorous radicalism as any of its advocates have done. He studied his own body, mind, and soul, and determined to live so that he might meet his individual needs. He urged no one to follow this special method of living, but rather he appealed to every reader to find out his own needs and conditions and utilize them for self-improvement. His conception of a noble character included the qualities of sincerity, purity, justice, contentment, industry tempered by leisure for spiritual refreshment, and a constant, loving study of Nature. To a marked degree he realized these traits in his mature years. Although he was sometimes prejudiced and uninformed on certain phases of life, although he seemed to many acquaintances only an egoist of unusual type, yet he practiced his own text, "Be resolutely and faithfully what you are; be humbly what you aspire to be."

In selecting these quotations the editor has chosen from the books published during Thoreau's life or prepared for publication largely in accord with his suggestions to family and friends. The aim has been to represent the significant aspects of his life and teachings. Many longer passages, which might reveal more fully his personality,

JANUARY

JANUARY FIRST

IF a man constantly aspires, is he not elevated? Did ever a man try heroism, magnanimity, truth, sincerity, and find that there was no advantage in them? that it was a vain endeavor?

Letters to Various Persons.

JANUARY SECOND

Who shall describe the inexpressible tenderness and immortal life of the grim forest, where Nature, though it be mid-winter, is ever in her spring, where the moss-grown and decaying trees are not old, but seem to enjoy a perpetual youth; and blissful, innocent Nature, like a serene infant, is too happy to make a noise, except by a few tinkling, lisping birds and trickling rills?

The Maine Woods.

JANUARY THIRD

I think that we may safely trust a good deal more than we do. We may waive just so much care of ourselves as we honestly bestow elsewhere. Nature is as well adapted to our

weakness as to our strength. The incessant anxiety and strain of some is a well-nigh incurable form of disease.

Walden.

JANUARY FOURTH

Books of natural history make the most cheerful winter reading. I read in Audubon with a thrill of delight, when the snow covers the ground, of the magnolia, and the Florida keys, and their warm sea-breezes; of the fence-rail, and the cotton-tree, and the migrations of the rice-bird; of the breaking up of winter in Labrador, and the melting of the snow on the forks of the Missouri; and owe an accession of health to these reminiscences of luxuriant Nature.

Natural History of Massachusetts.

JANUARY FIFTH

So is each one's world but a clearing in the forest, so much open and inclosed ground.

A Walk to Wachusett.

JANUARY SIXTH

What is the pill which will keep us well, serene, contented? Not my or thy great-grandfather's, but our great-grandmother Nature's universal, vegetable, botanic medicines, by which she has kept herself young always, outlived so many old

Parrs in her day, and fed her health with their decaying fatness.

Walden.

JANUARY SEVENTH

Think of the importance of Friendship in the education of men. It will make a man honest; it will make him a hero; it will make him a saint. It is the state of the just dealing with the just, the magnanimous with the magnanimous, the sincere with the sincere, man with man.

A Week on the Concord River.

JANUARY EIGHTH

Say what you have to say, not what you ought. Any truth is better than make-believe. Tom Hyde, the tinker, standing on the gallows, was asked if he had anything to say. "Tell the tailors," said he, "to remember to make a knot in their thread before they take the first stitch." His companion's prayer is forgotten.

Walden.

JANUARY NINTH

Nature confounds her summer distinctions at this season. The heavens seem to be nearer the earth. The elements are less reserved and distinct. Water turns to ice, rain to snow. The day is but a Scandinavian night. The winter is an arctic summer.

A Winter Walk.

JANUARY TENTH

There is, indeed, a tide in the affairs of men, as the poet says, and yet as things flow they circulate, and the ebb always balances the flow. All streams are but tributary to the ocean, which itself does not stream, and the shores are unchanged but in longer periods than man can measure.

A Week on the Concord River.

JANUARY ELEVENTH

When Winter fringes every bough
With his fantastic wreath,
And puts the seal of silence now
Upon the leaves beneath;

When every stream in its pent-house
Goes gurgling on its way,
And in his gallery the mouse
Nibbleth the meadow hay;

Methinks the summer still is nigh,
And lurketh underneath,
As that same meadow-mouse doth lie
Snug in that last year's heath.

A Winter Walk.

JANUARY TWELFTH

It is so hard to forget what it is worse than useless to remember.

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

JANUARY THIRTEENTH

I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit? If you have any enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes.

Walden.

JANUARY FOURTEENTH

But cowardice is unscientific; for there cannot be a science of ignorance. There may be a science of bravery, for that advances; but a retreat is rarely well conducted; if it is, then is it an orderly advance in the face of circumstances.

Massachusetts Natural History.

JANUARY FIFTEENTH

Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment.

Walden.

JANUARY SIXTEENTH

At least let us have healthy books, a stout horse-rake or a kitchen range which is not cracked. Let not the poet shed tears only for the public weal. He should be as vigorous as a sugar maple, with sap enough to maintain his own verdure, beside what runs into the troughs, and not like a vine, which being cut in the spring bears no fruit, but bleeds to death in the endeavor to heal its wounds.

A Week on the Concord River.

JANUARY SEVENTEENTH

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer?

Walden.

JANUARY EIGHTEENTH

The strongest wind cannot stagger a Spirit; it is a Spirit's breath. A just man's purpose cannot be split on any Grampus or material rock, but itself will split rocks till it succeeds.

Cape Cod.

JANUARY NINETEENTH

If there is nothing new on the earth, still the traveler always has a resource in the skies. They are constantly turning a new page to view. The wind sets the types on this blue ground, and the inquiring may always read a new truth there.

A Week on the Concord River.

JANUARY TWENTIETH

To enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude yourself from the true enjoyment of it. Let us improve our opportunities, then, before the evil days come.

Walking.

JANUARY TWENTY-FIRST

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow. As for *work*, we have n't any of any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus' dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still.

Walden.

JANUARY TWENTY-SECOND

What avails it though a light be placed on the top of a hill, if you spend all your life directly

under the hill? It might as well be under a bushel.

Cape Cod.

JANUARY TWENTY-THIRD

Most people with whom I talk, men and women even of some originality and genius, have their scheme of the universe all cut and dried, — very *dry*, I assure you, to hear, dry enough to burn, dry-rotted and powder-post, methinks, — which they set up between you and them in the shortest intercourse; an ancient and tottering frame with all its boards blown off. They do not walk without their bed.

Walden.

JANUARY TWENTY-FOURTH

Why should not we meet, not always as dyspeptics, to tell our bad dreams, but sometimes as *eu*peptics, to congratulate each other on the ever-glorious morning?

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

JANUARY TWENTY-FIFTH

Now chiefly is my natal hour,
And only now my prime of life.
I will not doubt the love untold,
Which not my worth nor want hath bought,
Which wooed me young and wooes me old,
And to this evening hath me brought.

A Week on the Concord River.

JANUARY TWENTY-SIXTH

Men are in the main alike, but they were made several in order that they might be various. If a low use is to be served, one man will do nearly or quite as well as another; if a high one, individual excellence is to be regarded.

Walking.

JANUARY TWENTY-SEVENTH

However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The faultfinder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is.

Walden.

JANUARY TWENTY-EIGHTH

Behind every man's busy-ness there should be a level of undisturbed serenity and industry, as within the reef encircling a coral isle there is always an expanse of still water, where the depositions are going on which will finally raise it above the surface.

A Week on the Concord River.

JANUARY TWENTY-NINTH

Follow your genius closely enough, and it will not fail to show you a fresh prospect every hour.

Walden.

JANUARY THIRTIETH

No face welcomed us but the fine fantastic sprays of free and happy evergreen trees, waving one above another in their ancient home.

The Maine Woods.

JANUARY THIRTY-FIRST

Art is as long as ever, but life is more interrupted and less available for a man's proper pursuits. It is not an era of repose. We have used up all our inherited freedom.

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

FEBRUARY

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FEBRUARY FIRST

THERE can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still. There was never yet such a storm but it was Æolian music to a healthy and innocent ear.

Walden.

FEBRUARY SECOND

Let no one think that I do not love the old ministers. They were, probably, the best men of their generation, and they deserve that their biographies should fill the pages of the town histories. If I could but hear the "glad tidings" of which they tell, and which, perchance, they heard, I might write in a worthier strain than this.

Cape Cod.

FEBRUARY THIRD

Methinks that must be where all my property lies, cast up on the rocks on some distant and unexplored stream, and waiting for an unheard-of

freshet to fetch it down. O make haste, ye gods, with your winds and rains, and start the jam before it rots!

The Maine Woods.

FEBRUARY FOURTH

Yet I rarely failed to find, even in mid-winter, some warm and springy swamp where the grass and the skunk-cabbage still put forth with perennial verdure, and some hardier bird occasionally awaited the return of spring.

Walden.

FEBRUARY FIFTH

How could the patient pine have known
The morning breeze would come,
Or humble flowers anticipate
The insect's noonday hum,—

Till the new light with morning cheer
From far streamed through the aisles,
And nimbly told the forest trees
For many stretching miles?

A Week on the Concord River.

FEBRUARY SIXTH

God Himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that

surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us.

Walden.

FEBRUARY SEVENTH

In the coldest and bleakest places, the warmest charities still maintain a foothold. A cold and searching wind drives away all contagion, and nothing can withstand it but what has a virtue in it; and accordingly, whatever we meet with in cold and bleak places, as the tops of mountains, we respect for a sort of sturdy innocence, a Puritan toughness.

A Winter Walk.

FEBRUARY EIGHTH

This world is but canvass to our imaginations. I see men with infinite pains endeavoring to realize to their bodies, what I, with at least equal pains, would realize to my imagination, — its capacities; for certainly there is a life of the mind above the wants of the body and independent of it.

A Week on the Concord River.

FEBRUARY NINTH

When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, — that petty fears

and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality.

Walden.

FEBRUARY TENTH

There is no ill which may not be dissipated, like the dark, if you let in a stronger light upon it.

A Week on the Concord River.

FEBRUARY ELEVENTH

Such is oftenest the young man's introduction to the forest, and the most original part of himself. He goes thither at first as a hunter and fisher, until at last, if he has the seeds of a better life in him, he distinguishes his proper objects, as a poet or naturalist it may be, and leaves the gun and fish-pole behind.

Walden.

FEBRUARY TWELFTH

It is true actually as it is true really; it is true materially as it is true spiritually, that they who seek honestly and sincerely, with all their hearts and lives and strength, to earn their bread, do earn it, and it is sure to be very sweet to them.

Letters to Various Persons.

FEBRUARY THIRTEENTH

In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty,

nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

Walden.

FEBRUARY FOURTEENTH

In society, in the best institutions of men, it is easy to detect a certain precocity. When we should still be growing children, we are already little men.

Walking.

FEBRUARY FIFTEENTH

Nothing can rightly compel a simple and brave man to a vulgar sadness. While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me.

Walden.

FEBRUARY SIXTEENTH

Behold the difference between the oriental and the occidental. The former has nothing to do in this world; the latter is full of activity. The one looks in the sun till his eyes are put out; the other follows him prone in his westward course.

A Week on the Concord River.

FEBRUARY SEVENTEENTH

In the winter, warmth stands for all virtue, and we resort in thought to a trickling rill, with its bare stones shining in the sun, and to warm springs in the woods, with as much eagerness as rabbits and robins. The steam which rises from swamps and pools, is as dear and domestic as that of our own kettle.

A Winter Walk.

FEBRUARY EIGHTEENTH

If a man has faith he will co-operate with equal faith everywhere; if he has not faith, he will continue to live like the rest of the world, whatever company he is joined to. To co-operate, in the highest as well as the lowest sense, means *to get our living together.*

Walden.

FEBRUARY NINETEENTH

But after all, man is the great poet, and not Homer or Shakspeare; and our language itself, and the common arts of life are his work.

A Week on the Concord River.

FEBRUARY TWENTIETH

But there is no such thing as accomplishing a righteous reform by the use of "expediency." There is no such thing as sliding up hill. In morals, the only sliders are back-sliders.

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-FIRST

When we would rest our bodies we cease to support them; we recline on the lap of earth. So when we would rest our spirits, we must recline on the Great Spirit.

Letters to Various Persons.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-SECOND

In the winter, the botanist needs not confine himself to his books and herbarium, and give over his out-door pursuits, but may study a new department of vegetable physiology, what may be called crystalline botany, then.

Massachusetts Natural History.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-THIRD

Music is the sound of the universal laws promulgated. It is the only assured tone. There are in it such strains as far surpass any man's faith in the loftiness of his destiny. Things are to be learned which it will be worth the while to learn.

A Week on the Concord River.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-FOURTH

How far men go for the material of their houses! The inhabitants of the most civilized cities, in all ages, send into far, primitive forests, beyond the bounds of their civilization, where the moose and bear and savage dwell, for their pine-boards

for ordinary use. And, on the other hand, the savage soon receives from cities, iron arrow-points, hatchets, and guns, to point his savageness with.

Walden.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-FIFTH

My spirits infallibly rise in proportion to the outward dreariness. Give me the ocean, the desert, or the wilderness!

Walking.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-SIXTH

It must be confessed that the Pilgrims possessed but few of the qualities of the modern pioneer. They were not the ancestors of the American backwoodsmen. They did not go at once into the woods with their axes. They were a family and church, and were more anxious to keep together, though it were on the sand, than to explore and colonize a New World.

Cape Cod.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-SEVENTH

Often the body is warmed, but the imagination is torpid; the body is fat, but the imagination is lean and shrunk.

A Week on the Concord River.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-EIGHTH

It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is nothing but work, work, work. I cannot easily buy a blank-book to write thoughts in; they are commonly ruled for dollars and cents.

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

FEBRUARY TWENTY-NINTH

In the winter, I stop short in the path to admire how the trees grow up without forethought, regardless of the time and circumstances. They do not wait as man does, but now is the golden age of the sapling. Earth, air, sun, and rain, are occasion enough; they were no better in primeval centuries. The "winter of *their* discontent" never comes.

Massachusetts Natural History.

MARCH

MARCH FIRST

MANY of the phenomena of Winter are suggestive of an inexpressible tenderness and fragile delicacy. We are accustomed to hear this king described as a rude and boisterous tyrant; but with the gentleness of a lover he adorns the tresses of Summer.

Walden.

MARCH SECOND

Happy the man who observes the heavenly and the terrestrial laws in just proportion; whose every faculty, from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head, obeys the law of its level; who neither stoops nor goes on tiptoe, but lives a balanced life, acceptable to Nature and to God.

Letters to Various Persons.

MARCH THIRD

If we could listen but for an instant to the chaunt of the Indian muse, we should understand why he will not exchange his savageness for civilization.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH FOURTH

But, on more accounts than one, I had had enough of moose-hunting. I had not come to the woods for this purpose, nor had I foreseen it, though I had been willing to learn how the Indian manœuvred; but one moose killed was as good, if not as bad, as a dozen. The afternoon's tragedy, and my share in it, as it affected the innocence, destroyed the pleasure of my adventure.

The Maine Woods.

MARCH FIFTH

It is true, I never assisted the sun materially in his rising, but, doubt not, it was of the last importance only to be present at it.

Walden.

MARCH SIXTH

The mariner who makes the safest port in Heaven, perchance, seems to his friends on earth to be shipwrecked, for they deem Boston Harbor the better place; though perhaps invisible to them, a skillful pilot comes to meet him, and the fairest and balmiest gales blow off that coast, his good ship makes the land in halcyon days, and he kisses the shore in rapture there, while his old hulk tosses in the surf here.

Cape Cod.

MARCH SEVENTH

A sentence should read as if its author, had he held a plow instead of a pen, could have drawn a furrow deep and straight to the end. The scholar requires hard and serious labor to give an impetus to his thought. He will learn to grasp the pen firmly so, and wield it gracefully and effectively, as an axe or a sword.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH EIGHTH

We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience.

Walden.

MARCH NINTH

I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least, — and it is commonly more than that, — sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements. You may safely say, A penny for your thoughts, or a thousand pounds.

Walking.

MARCH TENTH

The ears were made, not for such trivial uses as men are wont to suppose, but to hear celestial sounds. The eyes were not made for such grovelling uses as they are now put to and worn out by, but to behold beauty now invisible.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH ELEVENTH

Probably if our lives were more conformed to nature, we should not need to defend ourselves against her heats and colds, but find her our constant nurse and friend, as do plants and quadrupeds.

A Winter Walk.

MARCH TWELFTH

The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit, — not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic. Its throes will heave our exuviæ from their graves.

Walden.

MARCH THIRTEENTH

A man's ignorance sometimes is not only useful, but beautiful, — while his knowledge, so called, is oftentimes worse than useless, besides being ugly. Which is the best man to deal with, — he who knows nothing about a subject, and, what is extremely rare, knows that he knows nothing, or he who really knows something about it, but thinks that he knows all?

Walking.

MARCH FOURTEENTH

A true politeness does not result from any hasty and artificial polishing, it is true, but grows naturally in characters of the right grain and quality, through a long fronting of men and events, and rubbing on good and bad fortune.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH FIFTEENTH

Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction, — a work at which you would not be ashamed to invoke the Muse. So will help you God, and so only. Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work.

Walden.

MARCH SIXTEENTH

What is any man's discourse to me, if I am not sensible of something in it as steady and cheery as the creak of crickets? In it the woods must be relieved against the sky.

Massachusetts Natural History.

MARCH SEVENTEENTH

Yet these men had no need to travel to be as wise as Solomon in all his glory, so similar are the lives of men in all countries, and fraught with the same homely experiences. One half the world *knows* how the other half lives.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH EIGHTEENTH

To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live, according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically.

Walden.

MARCH NINETEENTH

What fire could ever equal the sunshine of a winter's day, when the meadow mice come out by the wallsides, and the chickadee lisps in the defiles of the wood? The warmth comes directly from the sun, and is not radiated from the earth,

as in summer; and when we feel his beams on our backs as we are treading some snowy dell, we are grateful as for a special kindness, and bless the sun which has followed us into that by-place.

A Winter Walk.

MARCH TWENTIETH

It is but thin soil where we stand; I have felt my roots in a richer ere this. I have seen a bunch of violets in a glass vase, tied loosely with a straw, which reminded me of myself. —

I am a parcel of vain strivings tied
By a chance bond together,
Dangling this way and that, their links
Were made so loose and wide,
Methinks,
For milder weather.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH TWENTY-FIRST

Our whole life is startlingly moral. There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice. Goodness is the only investment that never fails.

Walden.

MARCH TWENTY-SECOND

Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it.

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

MARCH TWENTY-THIRD

But if we would appreciate the flow that is in these books, we must expect to feel it rise from the page like an exhalation, and wash away our critical brains like burr millstones, flowing to higher levels above and behind ourselves.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH TWENTY-FOURTH

We do not realize how far and widely, or how near and narrowly, we are to look. The greater part of the phenomena of Nature are for this reason concealed from us all our lives. The gardener sees only the gardener's garden. Here, too, as in political economy, the supply answers to the demand. Nature does not cast pearls before swine.

Autumnal Tints.

MARCH TWENTY-FIFTH

So easy is it, though many housekeepers doubt it, to establish new and better customs in the place of the old. You need not rest your reputation on the dinners you give.

Walden.

MARCH TWENTY-SIXTH

May we not *see* God? Are we to be put off and amused in this life, as it were with a mere alle-

gory? Is not Nature, rightly read, that of which she is commonly taken to be the symbol merely?

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH TWENTY-SEVENTH

In society you will not find health, but in Nature. Unless our feet at least stood in the midst of Nature, all our faces would be pale and livid.

Massachusetts Natural History.

MARCH TWENTY-EIGHTH

Let a man take time enough for the most trivial deed, though it be but the paring of his nails. The buds swell imperceptibly, without hurry or confusion, as if the short spring days were an eternity.

A Week on the Concord River.

MARCH TWENY-NINTH

Perhaps the time will come when every house even will have not only its sleeping-rooms, and dining-room, and talking-room or parlor, but its thinking-room also, and the architects will put it into their plans.

A Yankee in Canada.

MARCH THIRTIETH

We do not live by justice but by grace. As the sort of justice which concerns us in our daily intercourse is not that administered by the judge

so the historical justice which we prize is not arrived at by nicely balancing the evidence.

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

MARCH THIRTY-FIRST

Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it.

Walden.

APRIL

APRIL FIRST

IN the long run men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high.

Walden.

APRIL SECOND

The little rill tinkled the louder, and peopled all the wilderness for me; and the glassy smoothness of the sleeping lake, laving the shores of a new world, with the dark, fantastic rocks rising here and there from its surface, made a scene not easily described. It has left such an impression of stern, yet gentle, wildness on my memory as will not soon be effaced.

The Maine Woods.

APRIL THIRD

The change from storm and winter to serene and mild weather, from dark and sluggish hours to bright and elastic ones, is a memorable crisis which all things proclaim. It is seemingly instantaneous at last.

Walden.

APRIL FOURTH

The Tree of Knowledge is a Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. He is not a true man of science who does not bring some sympathy to his studies, and expect to learn something by behavior as well as by application.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL FIFTH

All that is told of the sea has a fabulous sound to an inhabitant of the land, and all its products have a certain fabulous quality, as if they belonged to another planet, from sea-weed to a sailor's yarn, or a fish-story. In this element the animal and vegetable kingdoms meet and are strangely mingled.

Cape Cod.

APRIL SIXTH

Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships, after a style purely his own, nor can he get off by hammering marble instead. We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones. Any nobleness begins at once to refine a man's features, any meanness or sensuality to imbrute them.

Walden.

APRIL SEVENTH

The landscape-painter uses the figures of men to mark a road. He would not make that use of my figure. I walk out into a Nature such as the old prophets and poets, Menu, Moses, Homer, Chaucer, walked in.

Walking.

APRIL EIGHTH

How many mornings, summer and winter, before yet any neighbor was stirring about his business, have I been about mine! No doubt, many of my townsmen have met me returning from this enterprise, farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work.

Walden.

APRIL NINTH

A book should contain pure discoveries, glimpses of *terra firma*, though by shipwrecked mariners, and not the art of navigation by those who have never been out of sight of land.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL TENTH

So simplify the problem of life, distinguish the necessary and the real. Probe the earth to see where your main roots run.

Letters to Various Persons.

APRIL ELEVENTH

But Chaucer is fresh and modern still, and no dust settles on his true passages. It lightens along the line, and we are reminded that flowers have bloomed, and birds sung, and hearts beaten, in England. Before the earnest gaze of the reader, the rust and moss of time gradually drop off, and the original green life is revealed. He was a homely and domestic man, and did breathe quite as modern men do.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL TWELFTH

The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever! The faint silvery warblings heard over the partially bare and moist fields from the bluebird, the song-sparrow, and the red-wing, as if the last flakes of winter tinkled as they fell! What at such a time are histories, chronologies, traditions, and all written revelations?

Walden.

APRIL THIRTEENTH

Genius is a light which makes the darkness visible, like the lightning's flash, which perchance shatters the temple of knowledge itself, — and not a taper lighted at the hearth-stone of the race, which pales before the light of common day.

Walking.

APRIL FOURTEENTH

There are some things which a man never speaks of, which are much finer kept silent about. To the highest communications we only lend a silent ear. Our finest relations are not simply kept silent about, but buried under a positive depth of silence, never to be revealed.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL FIFTEENTH

It is true, we are such poor navigators that our thoughts, for the most part, stand off and on upon a harborless coast, are conversant only with the bights of the bays of poesy, or steer for the public ports of entry, and go into the dry docks of science, where they merely refit for this world, and no natural currents concur to individualize them.

Walden.

APRIL SIXTEENTH

The most interesting thing which I heard of, in this township of Hull, was an unfailing spring, whose locality was pointed out to me, on the side of a distant hill, as I was panting along the shore, though I did not visit it. Perhaps, if I should go through Rome, it would be some spring on the Capitoline Hill I should remember the longest.

Cape Cod.

APRIL SEVENTEENTH

One generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels.

Walden.

APRIL EIGHTEENTH

Tell Shakspeare to attend some leisure hour,
For now I 've business with this drop of dew,
And see you not, the clouds prepare a shower, —
I 'll meet him shortly when the sky is blue.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL NINETEENTH

I suspect that, if you should go to the end of the world, you would find somebody there going farther, as if just starting for home at sundown, and having a last word before he drove off.

The Maine Woods.

APRIL TWENTIETH

We do not learn much from learned books, but from true, sincere, human books, from frank and honest biographies.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL TWENTY-FIRST

As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts and hide its head from me who might, perhaps,

be its benefactor and impart to its race some cheering information, I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me, the human insect.

Walden.

APRIL TWENTY-SECOND

The rarest quality in an epitaph is truth. If any character is given it should be as severely true as the decision of the three judges below, and not the partial testimony of friends.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL TWENTY-THIRD

Methinks I see the thousand shrines erected to Hospitality shining afar in all countries, as well Mahometan and Jewish, as Christian, khans, and caravansaries, and inns, whither all pilgrims without distinction resort.

The Landlord.

APRIL TWENTY-FOURTH

Between whom there is hearty truth there is love; and in proportion to our truthfulness and confidence in one another, our lives are divine and miraculous, and answer to our ideal.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL TWENTY-FIFTH

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluviatile trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows.

Walden.

APRIL TWENTY-SIXTH

Humor is not so distinct a quality as, for the purposes of criticism, it is commonly regarded, but allied to every other, even the divine faculty. The familiar and cheerful conversation about every hearthside, if it be analyzed, will be found to be sweetened by this principle.

Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers.

APRIL TWENTY-SEVENTH

For a companion, I require one who will make an equal demand on me with my own genius. Such a one will always be rightly tolerant. It is suicide and corrupts good manners to welcome any less than this. I value and trust those who love and praise my aspiration rather than my performance.

A Week on the Concord River.

APRIL TWENTY-EIGHTH

As every season seems best to us in its turn, so the coming in of spring is like the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and the realization of the Golden Age.

Walden.

APRIL TWENTY-NINTH

Only their names and residence make one love fishes. I would know even the number of their fin-rays, and how many scales compose the lateral line. I am the wiser in respect to all knowledges, and the better qualified for all fortunes, for knowing that there is a minnow in the brook. Methinks I have need even of his sympathy, and to be his fellow in a degree.

Massachusetts Natural History.

APRIL THIRTIETH

Shadows, referred to the source of light, are pyramids whose bases are never greater than those of the substances which cast them, but light is a spherical congeries of pyramids, whose very apexes are the sun itself, and hence the system shines with uninterrupted light. But if the light we use is but a paltry and narrow taper, most objects will cast a shadow wider than themselves.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY

MAY FIRST

IN the midst of this labyrinth let us live a *thread* of life. We must act with so rapid and resistless a purpose in *one* direction that our vices will necessarily trail behind.

Letters to Various Persons.

MAY SECOND

I 've heard within my inmost soul
Such cheerful morning news,
In the horizon of my mind
Have seen such orient hues,

As in the twilight of the dawn,
When the first birds awake,
Are heard within some silent wood,
Where they the small twigs break.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY THIRD

Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten

toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail.

Walden.

MAY FOURTH

There is thus about all natural products a certain volatile and ethereal quality which represents their highest value, and which cannot be vulgarized, or bought and sold.

Wild Apples.

MAY FIFTH

The meadow flowers spring and bloom where the waters annually deposit their slime, not where they reach in some freshet only. A man is not his hope, nor his despair, nor yet his past deed.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY SIXTH

Under the one word, house, are included the school-house, the alms-house, the jail, the tavern, the dwelling-house; and the meanest shed or cave in which men live contains the elements of all these. But nowhere on the earth stands the entire and perfect house.

Excursions.

MAY SEVENTH

No doubt another *may* also think for me; but it is not therefore desirable that he should do so to the exclusion of my thinking for myself.

Walden.

MAY EIGHTH

A Friend is one who incessantly pays us the compliment of expecting from us all the virtues, and who can appreciate them in us. It takes two to speak the truth, — one to speak, and another to hear.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY NINTH

It is generally supposed that they who have long been conversant with the Ocean can foretell by certain indications, such as its roar and the notes of sea-fowl, when it will change from calm to storm; but probably no such ancient mariner as we dream of exists; they know no more, at least, than the older sailors do about this voyage of life on which we are all embarked.

Cape Cod.

MAY TENTH

Nations are possessed with an insane ambition to perpetuate the memory of themselves by the amount of hammered stone they leave. What

if equal pains were taken to smooth and polish their manners? One piece of good sense would be more memorable than a monument as high as the moon.

Walden.

MAY ELEVENTH

Nature has taken more care than the fondest parent for the education and refinement of her children. Consider the silent influence which flowers exert, no less upon the ditcher in the meadow than the lady in the bower. When I walk in the woods, I am reminded that a wise purveyor has been there before me; my most delicate experience is typified there.

Excursions.

MAY TWELFTH

Can there be any greater reproach than an idle learning? Learn to split wood, at least. The necessity of labor and conversation with many men and things, to the scholar is rarely well remembered; steady labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, is unquestionably the best method of removing palaver and sentimentality out of one's style, both of speaking and writing.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY THIRTEENTH

It was a very inspiriting sound to walk by, filling the whole air, that of the sea dashing against the land, heard several miles inland. Instead of having a dog to growl before your door, to have an Atlantic Ocean to growl for a whole Cape! On the whole, we are glad of the storm, which would show us the ocean in its angriest mood.

Cape Cod.

MAY FOURTEENTH

When I think of the benefactors of the race, whom we have apotheosized as messengers from heaven, bearers of divine gifts to man, I do not see in my mind any retinue at their heels, any car-load of fashionable furniture.

Walden.

MAY FIFTEENTH

In May and June the woodland quire is in full tune, and given the immense spaces of hollow air, and this curious human ear, one does not see how the void could be better filled.

Each summer sound
Is a summer round.

Excursions.

MAY SIXTEENTH

The very timber and boards and shingles of which our houses are made, grew but yesterday in a wilderness where the Indian still hunts and the moose runs wild. New York has her wilderness within her own borders; and though the sailors of Europe are familiar with the soundings of her Hudson, and Fulton long since invented the steamboat on its waters, an Indian is still necessary to guide her scientific men to its head-waters in the Adirondac country.

The Maine Woods.

MAY SEVENTEENTH

As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.

Walden.

MAY EIGHTEENTH

Surely the fates are forever kind, though Nature's laws are more immutable than any despot's, yet to man's daily life they rarely seem rigid, but permit him to relax with license in summer weather. He is not harshly reminded of the things he may not do.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY NINETEENTH

How prompt we are to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our bodies, how slow to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our souls.

Letters to Various Persons.

MAY TWENTIETH

We loiter in winter while it is already spring. In a pleasant spring morning all men's sins are forgiven. Such a day is a truce to vice. While such a sun holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return. Through our own recovered innocence we discern the innocence of our neighbors.

Walden.

MAY TWENTY-FIRST

You can hardly convince a man of an error in a life-time, but must content yourself with the reflection that the progress of science is slow. If he is not convinced, his grand-children may be.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY TWENTY-SECOND

I would say to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, sometimes, — Go to grass. You have eaten hay long enough. The spring has come with its green crop. The very cows are driven to their country pastures before the end of May; though I have heard of one unnatural farmer who kept his cow in the barn

and fed her on hay all the year round. So, frequently, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge treats its cattle.

Walking.

MAY TWENTY-THIRD

Still grows the vivacious lilac a generation after the door and lintel and the sill are gone, unfolding its sweet-scented flowers each spring, to be plucked by the musing traveller; planted and tended once by children's hands, in front-yard plots, — now standing by wall-sides in retired pastures, and giving place to new-rising forests; — the last of that stirp, sole survivor of that family.

Walden.

MAY TWENTY-FOURTH

The world seemed decked for some holyday or prouder pageantry, with silken streamers flying, and the course of our lives to wind on before us like a green lane into a country maze, at the season when fruit trees are in blossom.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY TWENTY-FIFTH

The flowers of the apple are perhaps the most beautiful of any tree's, so copious and so delicious to both sight and scent. The walker is frequently tempted to turn and linger near some

more than usually handsome one, whose blossoms are two thirds expanded. How superior it is in these respects to the pear, whose blossoms are neither colored nor fragrant!

Wild Apples.

MAY TWENTY-SIXTH

I would not subtract anything from the praise that is due to philanthropy, but merely demand justice for all who by their lives and works are a blessing to mankind. I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves.

Walden.

MAY TWENTY-SEVENTH

It may be that the forenoon is brighter than the afternoon, not only because of the greater transparency of its atmosphere, but because we naturally look most into the west, as forward into the day, and so in the forenoon see the sunny side of things, but in the afternoon the shadow of every tree.

A Week on the Concord River.

MAY TWENTY-EIGHTH

It is remarkable what a serious business men make of getting their dinners, and how universally shiftlessness and a grovelling taste take refuge in a merely ant-like industry. Better go

without your dinner, I thought, than be thus everlastingly fishing for it like a cormorant. Of course, *viewed from the shore*, our pursuits in the country appear not a whit less frivolous.

Cape Cod.

MAY TWENTY-NINTH

In my walks I would fain return to my senses. What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods? I suspect myself, and cannot help a shudder, when I find myself so implicated even in what are called good works, — for this may sometimes happen.

Walking.

MAY THIRTIETH

The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature, — of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter, — such health, such cheer, they afford forever! and such sympathy have they ever with our race, that all Nature would be affected, and the sun's brightness fade, and the winds would sigh humanely, and the clouds rain tears, and the woods shed their leaves and put on mourning in midsummer, if any man should ever for a just cause grieve.

Walden.

And to be admitted to Nature's hearth costs nothing. None is excluded; but excludes himself. You have only to push aside the curtain.

Letters to Various Persons.

JUNE

JUNE FIRST

NO run on my bank can drain it, for my wealth is not possession but enjoyment.

Letters to Various Persons.

JUNE SECOND

The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour, at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night.

Walden.

JUNE THIRD

Thank God, no Hindoo tyranny prevailed at the framing of the world, but we are freemen of the universe, and not sentenced to any caste.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE FOURTH

Nature has from the first expanded the minute blossoms of the forest only toward the heavens, above men's heads and unobserved by them.

We see only the flowers that are under our feet in the meadows.

Walking.

JUNE FIFTH

What is it gilds the trees and clouds,
And paints the heavens so gay,
But yonder fast abiding light
With its unchanging ray?

Lo, when the sun streams through the wood,
Upon a winter's morn,
Where'er his silent beams intrude
The murky night is gone.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE SIXTH

You will pardon some obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint "No Admittance" on my gate.

Walden.

JUNE SEVENTH

Nature will bear the closest inspection; she invites us to lay our eye level with the smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain. She has no interstices; every part is full of life. I explore, too, with pleasure, the sources of the

myriad sounds which crowd the summer noon, and which seem the very grain and stuff of which eternity is made.

Excursions.

JUNE EIGHTH

We do not avoid evil by fleeing before it, but by rising above or diving below its plane; as the worm escapes drought and frost by boring a few inches deeper.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE NINTH

No people can long continue provincial in character who have the propensity for politics and whittling, and rapid travelling, which the Yankees have, and who are leaving the mother country behind in the variety of their notions and inventions. The possession and exercise of practical talent merely are a sure and rapid means of intellectual culture and independence.

The Maine Woods.

JUNE TENTH

The restless ocean may at any moment cast up a whale or a wrecked vessel at your feet. All the reporters in the world, the most rapid stenographers, could not report the news it brings.

Cape Cod.

JUNE ELEVENTH

A man may esteem himself happy when that which is his food is also his medicine. There is no kind of herb that grows, but somebody or other says that it is good. I am very glad to hear it. It reminds me of the first chapter of Genesis.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE TWELFTH

We are made to exaggerate the importance of what work we do; and yet how much is not done by us! or, what if we had been taken sick? How vigilant we are! determined not to live by faith if we can avoid it; all the day long on the alert, at night we unwillingly say our prayers and commit ourselves to uncertainties.

Walden.

JUNE THIRTEENTH

Why should not our whole life and its scenery be actually thus fair and distinct? All our lives want a suitable background. They should at least, like the life of the anchorite, be as impressive to behold as objects in the desert, a broken shaft or crumbling mound against a limitless horizon.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE FOURTEENTH

The pines have developed their delicate blossoms on the highest twigs of the wood every summer

for ages, as well over the heads of Nature's red children as of her white ones; yet scarcely a farmer or hunter in the land has ever seen them.

Excursions.

JUNE FIFTEENTH

To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object.

Walden.

JUNE SIXTEENTH

Homeliness is almost as great a merit in a book as in a house, if the reader would abide there. It is next to beauty, and a very high art. Some have this merit only.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE SEVENTEENTH

Moreover, you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking. When a traveller asked Wordsworth's servant to show him her master's study, she answered, "Here is his library, but his study is out of doors."

Excursions.

JUNE EIGHTEENTH

The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere.

Walden.

JUNE NINETEENTH

But special I remember thee,
Wachusett, who like me
Standest alone without society.
Thy far blue eye,
A remnant of the sky,
Seen through the clearing or the gorge,
Or from the windows on the forge,
Doth leaven all it passes by.
Nothing is true,
But stands 'tween me and you,
Thou western pioneer
Who know'st not shame nor fear,
By venturous spirit driven,
Under the eaves of heaven,
And can'st expand thee there,
And breathe enough of air?
Upholding heaven, holding down earth,
Thy pastime from thy birth,
Not steadied by the one nor leaning on the other;
May I approve myself thy worthy brother!

A Walk to Wachusett.

JUNE TWENTIETH

Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.

Walden.

JUNE TWENTY-FIRST

The present hour is always wealthiest when it is poorer than the future ones, as that is the pleasantest site which affords the pleasantest prospect.

Letters to Various Persons.

JUNE TWENTY-SECOND

The Friend asks no return but that his Friend will religiously accept and wear and not disgrace his apotheosis of him. They cherish each other's hopes. They are kind to each other's dreams.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE TWENTY-THIRD

What avails it that you are Christian, if you are not purer than the heathen, if you deny yourself no more, if you are not more religious? I know of many systems of religion esteemed heathenish whose precepts fill the reader with shame, and provoke him to new endeavors, though it be to the performance of rites merely.

Walden.

JUNE TWENTY-FOURTH

In the night the eyes are partly closed or retire into the head. Other senses take the lead. The walker is guided as well by the sense of smell.

Excursions.

JUNE TWENTY-FIFTH

What exercise is to the body, employment is to the mind and morals.

Letters to Various Persons.

JUNE TWENTY-SIXTH

But it is fit that the Past should be dark; though the darkness is not so much a quality of the past as of tradition. It is not a distance of time, but a distance of relation, which makes thus dusky its memorials. What is near to the heart of this generation is fair and bright still.

A Week on the Concord River.

JUNE TWENTY-SEVENTH

We should impart our courage, and not our despair, our health and ease, and not our disease, and take care that this does not spread by contagion.

Walden.

JUNE TWENTY-EIGHTH

Other seeds I have which will find other things in that corner of my garden, in like fashion, almost any fruit you wish, every year for ages,

until the crop more than fills the whole garden. You have but little more to do, than throw up your cap for entertainment these American days. Perfect alchemists I keep, who can transmute substances without end; and thus the corner of my garden is an inexhaustible treasure-chest.

The Succession of Forest Trees.

JUNE TWENTY-NINTH

I shall be a benefactor if I conquer some realms from the night, if I report to the gazettes anything transpiring about us at that season worthy of their attention, — if I can show men that there is some beauty awake while they are asleep, — if I add to the domains of poetry.

Night and Moonlight.

JUNE THIRTIETH

No man who acts from a sense of duty ever puts the lesser duty above the greater. No man has the desire and ability to work on high things, but he has also the ability to build himself a high staging.

Letters to Various Persons.

JULY

JULY FIRST

ALL the world reposes in beauty to him who preserves equipoise in his life, and moves serenely on his path without secret violence; as he who sails down a stream, he has only to steer, keeping his bark in the middle, and carry it round the falls.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY SECOND

It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof.

Walden.

JULY THIRD

Live your life, do your work, then take your hat.
I have no patience towards
Such conscientious cowards.
Give me simple laboring folk,
Who love their work,
Whose virtue is a song
To cheer God along.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY FOURTH

To-day it was the Purple Sea, an epithet which I should not before have accepted. There were distinct patches of the color of a purple grape with the bloom rubbed off. But first and last the sea is of all colors.

Cape Cod.

JULY FIFTH

Many men walk by day; few walk by night. It is a very different season. Take a July night, for instance. About ten o'clock, — when man is asleep, and day fairly forgotten, — the beauty of moonlight is seen over lonely pastures where cattle are silently feeding. On all sides novelties present themselves. Instead of the sun there are the moon and stars, instead of the wood-thrush there is the whip-poor-will, — instead of butterflies in the meadows, fire-flies, winged sparks of fire! who would have believed it?

Night and Moonlight.

JULY SIXTH

Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board. The hospitality was as cold as the ices.

Walden.

JULY SEVENTH

Bring a spray from the wood, or a crystal from the brook, and place it on your mantel, and your household ornaments will seem plebeian beside its nobler fashion and bearing. It will wave superior there, as if used to a more refined and polished circle. It has a salute and a response to all your enthusiasm and heroism.

Massachusetts Natural History.

JULY EIGHTH

Poetry is so universally true and independent of experience, that it does not need any particular biography to illustrate it, but we refer it sooner or later to some Orpheus or Linus, and after ages to the genius of humanity, and the gods themselves.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY NINTH

I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society.

Excursions.

JULY TENTH

But we had hardly got out of the streets of Bangor before I began to be exhilarated by the sight of the wild fir and spruce-tops, and those

of other primitive evergreens, peering through the mist in the horizon. It was like the sight and odor of cake to a schoolboy.

The Maine Woods.

JULY ELEVENTH

The true husbandman will cease from anxiety, as the squirrels manifest no concern whether the woods will bear chestnuts this year or not, and finish his labor with every day, relinquishing all claim to the produce of his fields, and sacrificing in his mind not only his first but his last fruits also.

Walden.

JULY TWELFTH

Some youthful spring, perchance, still empties with tinkling music into the oldest river, even when it is falling into the sea, and we imagine that its music is distinguished by the river gods from the general lapse of the stream, and falls sweeter on their ears in proportion as it is nearer to the ocean.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY THIRTEENTH

There is, however, this consolation to the most way-worn traveler, upon the dustiest road, that the path his feet describe is so perfectly symbolical of human life, — now climbing the hills, now

descending into the vales. From the summits he beholds the heavens and the horizon, from the vales he looks up to the heights again. He is treading his old lessons still, and though he may be very weary and travel-worn, it is yet sincere experience.

A Walk to Wachusett.

JULY FOURTEENTH

There is something singularly grand and impressive in the sound of a tree falling in a perfectly calm night like this, as if the agencies which overthrow it did not need to be excited, but worked with a subtle, deliberate, and conscious force, like a boa-constrictor, and more effectively then than even in a windy day. If there is any such difference, perhaps it is because trees with the dews of the night on them are heavier than by day.

The Maine Woods.

JULY FIFTEENTH

I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion.

Walden.

As we have said, Nature is a greater and more perfect art, the art of God; though, referred to herself, she is genius, and there is a similarity between her operations and man's art even in

the details and trifles. When the overhanging pine drops into the water, by the sun and water, and the wind rubbing it against the shore, its boughs are worn into fantastic shapes, and white and smooth, as if turned in a lathe.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY SIXTEENTH

My "best" room, however, my withdrawing room, always ready for company, on whose carpet the sun rarely fell, was the pine wood behind my house. Thither in summer days, when distinguished guests came, I took them, and a priceless domestic swept the floor and dusted the furniture and kept the things in order.

Walden.

JULY SEVENTEENTH

But there are spirits of a yet more liberal culture, to whom no simplicity is barren. There are not only stately pines, but fragile flowers, like the orchises, commonly described as too delicate for cultivation, which derive their nutriment from the crudest mass of peat. These remind us, that, not only for strength, but for beauty, the poet must, from time to time, travel the logger's path and the Indian's trail, to drink at some new and more bracing fountain of the Muses, far in the recesses of the wilderness.

The Maine Woods.

JULY EIGHTEENTH

Be not simply good; be good for something.

Letters to Various Persons.

JULY NINETEENTH

It was a singular experience, that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over, and selling them, — the last was the hardest of all, — I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans.

Walden.

JULY TWENTIETH

When I visit again some haunt of my youth, I am glad to find that Nature wears so well. The landscape is indeed something real, and solid, and sincere, and I have not put my foot through it yet.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY TWENTY-FIRST

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

Walden.

JULY TWENTY-SECOND

Unless our philosophy hears the cock crow in every barn-yard within our horizon, it is belated. That sound commonly reminds us that we are growing rusty and antique in our employments and habits of thought. His philosophy comes down to a more recent time than ours. There is something suggested by it that is a newer testament, — the gospel according to this moment.

Excursions.

JULY TWENTY-THIRD

We had come away up here among the hills to learn the impartial and unbribable beneficence of Nature. Strawberries and melons grow as well in one man's garden as another's, and the sun lodges as kindly under his hill-side, — when we had imagined that she inclined rather to some few earnest and faithful souls whom we know.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY TWENTY-FOURTH

I was struck by this universal spiring upward of the forest evergreens. The tendency is to slender, spiring tops, while they are narrower below. Not only the spruce and fir, but even the arbor-vitæ and white-pine, unlike the soft, spreading second-growth, of which I saw none,

all spire upwards, lifting a dense spear-head of cones to the light and air, at any rate, while their branches straggle after as they may; as Indians lift the ball over the heads of the crowd in their desperate game. In this they resemble grasses, as also palms somewhat. The hemlock is commonly a tent-like pyramid from the ground to its summit.

The Maine Woods.

JULY TWENTY-FIFTH

Rescue the drowning and tie your shoe-strings. Take your time, and set about some free labor.

Walden.

JULY TWENTY-SIXTH

We often love to think now of the life of men on beaches, — at least in midsummer, when the weather is serene; their sunny lives on the sand, amid the beach-grass and the bayberries, their companion a cow, their wealth a jag of drift-wood or a few beach-plums, and their music the surf and the peep of the beach-bird.

Cape Cod.

JULY TWENTY-SEVENTH

We are as happy as the birds when our Good Genius permits us to pursue any outdoor work

without a sense of dissipation. Our pen-knife glitters in the sun; our voice is echoed by yonder wood; if an oar drops, we are fain to let it drop again.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY TWENTY-EIGHTH

Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But alas! we do like cowbirds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built, and cheer no traveler with their chattering and unmusical notes.

Walden.

JULY TWENTY-NINTH

Honest traveling is about as dirty work as you can do, and a man needs a pair of overalls for it.

A Yankee in Canada.

JULY THIRTIETH

There is always room and occasion enough for a true book on any subject; as there is room for more light the brightest day and more rays will not interfere with the first.

A Week on the Concord River.

JULY THIRTY-FIRST

It is remarkable that men do not sail the sea with more expectation. Nothing remarkable was ever accomplished in a prosaic mood. The heroes and discoverers have found true more than was previously believed, only when they were expecting and dreaming of something more than their contemporaries dreamed of, or even themselves discovered, that is, when they were in a frame of mind fitted to behold the truth.

Cape Cod.

AUGUST

AUGUST FIRST

MORNING brings back the heroic ages. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it; a standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world.

Walden.

AUGUST SECOND

The only fruit which even much living yields seems to be often only some trivial success, — the ability to do some slight thing better. We make conquest only of husks and shells for the most part, — at least, apparently, — but sometimes these are cinnamon and spices, you know.

Letters to Various Persons.

AUGUST THIRD

So near along life's stream are the fountains of innocence and youth making fertile its sandy margin; and the voyageur will do well to replenish his vessels often at these uncontaminated sources.

A Week on the Concord River.

AUGUST FOURTH

It is true, I came as near as is possible to come to being a hunter and miss it, myself; and as it is, I think that I could spend a year in the woods, fishing and hunting, just enough to sustain myself, with satisfaction. This would be next to living like a philosopher on the fruits of the earth which you had raised, which also attracts me.

The Maine Woods.

AUGUST FIFTH

Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life, that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them. Their fingers, from excessive toil, are too clumsy and tremble too much for that.

Walden.

AUGUST SIXTH

Early apples begin to be ripe about the first of August; but I think that none of them are so good to eat as some to smell. One is worth more to scent your handkerchief with than any perfume which they sell in the shops. The fragrance of some fruits is not to be forgotten, along with that of flowers.

Wild Apples.

AUGUST SEVENTH

The very uprightness of the pines and maples asserts the ancient rectitude and vigor of Nature. Our lives need the relief of such a background, where the pine flourishes and the jay still screams.

A Week on the Concord River.

AUGUST EIGHTH

It is not every truth that recommends itself to the common sense. Nature has a place for the wild clematis as well as for the cabbage. Some expressions of truth are reminiscent, — others merely *sensible*, as the phrase is, — others prophetic.

Excursions.

AUGUST NINTH

For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snow storms and rain storms, and did my duty faithfully; surveyor, if not of highways,

then of forest paths and all across-lot routes, keeping them open, and ravines bridged and passable at all seasons, where the public heel had testified to their utility.

Walden.

AUGUST TENTH

If with fancy unfurled
You leave your abode,
You may go round the world
By the Old Marlborough Road.

The Old Marlborough Road.

AUGUST ELEVENTH

There are moments when all anxiety and stated toil are becalmed in the infinite leisure and repose of Nature. All laborers must have their nooning, and at this season of the day, we are all, more or less, Asiatics, and give over all work and reform.

A Week on the Concord River.

AUGUST TWELFTH

The amount of it is, if a man is alive, there is always *danger* that he may die, though the danger must be allowed to be less in proportion as he is dead-and-alive to begin with. A man sits as many risks as he runs.

Walden.

AUGUST THIRTEENTH

When I detect a beauty in any of the recesses of Nature, I am reminded, by the serene and retired spirit in which it requires to be contemplated, of the inexpressible privacy of a life, — how silent and unambitious it is. The beauty there is in mosses must be considered from the holiest, quietest nook.

Excursions.

AUGUST FOURTEENTH

In summer we live out of doors, and have only impulses and feelings, which are all for action, and must wait commonly for the stillness and longer nights of autumn and wholly new life, which no man has lived; that even this earth was made for more mysterious and nobler inhabitants than men and women.

A Week on the Concord River.

AUGUST FIFTEENTH

The cart before the horse is neither beautiful nor useful. Before we can adorn our houses with beautiful objects the walls must be stripped, and our lives must be stripped, and beautiful housekeeping and beautiful living be laid for a foundation: now, a taste for the beautiful is most cultivated out of doors, where there is no house and no housekeeper.

Walden.

AUGUST SIXTEENTH

Truly the stars were given for a consolation to man. We should not know but our life were fated to be always grovelling, but it is permitted to behold them, and surely they are deserving of a fair destiny. We see laws which never fail, of whose failure we never conceived; and their lamps burn all the night, too, as well as all day, — so rich and lavish is that nature which can afford this superfluity of light.

A Walk to Wachusett.

AUGUST SEVENTEENTH

The hero then will know how to wait, as well as to make haste. All good abides with him who waiteth *wisely;* we shall sooner overtake the dawn by remaining here than by hurrying over the hills of the west. Be assured that every man's success is in proportion to his *average* ability.

A Week on the Concord River.

AUGUST EIGHTEENTH

In autumn, even in August, the thoughtful days begin, and we can walk anywhere with profit. Beside, an outward cold and dreariness, which make it necessary to seek shelter at night, lend a spirit of adventure to a walk.

Cape Cod.

AUGUST NINETEENTH

The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.

Walden.

AUGUST TWENTIETH

By the twentieth of August, everywhere in woods and swamps, we are reminded of the fall, both by the richly spotted Sarsaparilla-leaves and Brakes, and the withering and blackened Skunk-Cabbage and Hellebore, and, by the river-side, the already blackening Pontederia.

Autumnal Tints.

AUGUST TWENTY-FIRST

There have been heroes for whom this world seemed expressly prepared, as if creation had at last succeeded; whose daily life was the stuff of which our dreams are made, and whose presence enhanced the beauty and ampleness of Nature herself.

A Week on the Concord River.

AUGUST TWENTY-SECOND

The words which express our faith and piety are not definite; yet they are significant and fragrant like frankincense to superior natures.

Walden.

AUGUST TWENTY-THIRD

I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks, — who had a genius, so to speak, for *sauntering:* which word is beautifully derived from "idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going *à la Sainte Terre*," to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes a *Sainte-Terrer*," a Saunterer, — a Holy-Lander.

Walking.

AUGUST TWENTY-FOURTH

The light-house lamps a few feet distant shone full into my chamber, and made it as bright as day, so I knew exactly how the Highland Light bore all that night, and I was in no danger of being wrecked. Unlike the last, this was as still as a summer night.

Cape Cod.

AUGUST TWENTY-FIFTH

There is just as much beauty visible to us in the landscape as we are prepared to appreciate, — not a grain more. The actual objects which one man will see from a particular hill-top are just as different from those which another will see as the beholders are different.

Autumnal Tints.

AUGUST TWENTY-SIXTH

Why is it that the priest is never called to consult with the physician? It is because men believe practically that matter is independent of spirit. But what is quackery? It is commonly an attempt to cure the diseases of a man by addressing his body alone. There is need of a physician who shall minister to both soul and body at once, that is, to man. Now he falls between two stools.

Walden.

AUGUST TWENTY-SEVENTH

The poet will write for his peers alone. He will remember only that he saw truth and beauty from his position, and expect the time when a vision as broad shall overlook the same field as freely.

A Week on the Concord River.

AUGUST TWENTY-EIGHTH

From my experience with wild apples, I can understand that there may be reason for a savage's preferring many kinds of food which the civilized man rejects. The former has the palate of an out-door man. It takes a savage or wild taste to appreciate a wild fruit. What a healthy out-of-door appetite it takes to relish the apple of life, the apple of the world, then!

Wild Apples.

AUGUST TWENTY-NINTH

The breakers looked like droves of a thousand wild horses of Neptune, rushing to the shore, with their white manes streaming far behind; and when, at length, the sun shone for a moment, their manes were rainbow-tinted. Also, the long kelp-weed was tossed up from time to time, like the tails of sea-cows sporting in the brine.

Cape Cod.

AUGUST THIRTIETH

We worship not the Graces, nor the Parcæ, but Fashion. She spins and weaves and cuts with full authority.

Walden.

AUGUST THIRTY-FIRST

My life is like a stroll upon the beach,
As near the ocean's edge as I can go,
My tardy steps its waves sometimes o'erreach,
Sometimes I stay to let them overflow.

My sole employment 't is, and scrupulous care,
To place my gains beyond the reach of tides,
Each smoother pebble, and each shell more rare,
Which ocean kindly to my hand confides.

I have but few companions on the shore,
They scorn the strand who sail upon the sea,
Yet oft I think the ocean they 've sailed o'er
Is deeper known upon the strand to me.

The middle sea contains no crimson dulse,
  Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view,
Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,
  And I converse with many a shipwrecked crew.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER FIRST

IF you would get exercise, go in search of the springs of life. Think of a man's swinging dumb-bells for his health, when those springs are bubbling up in far-off pastures unsought by him!

Walking.

SEPTEMBER SECOND

Sometimes a mortal feels in himself Nature, not his Father but his Mother stirs within him, and he becomes immortal with her immortality. From time to time she claims kindredship with us, and some globule from her veins steals up into our own.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER THIRD

Undoubtedly the very tedium and ennui which presume to have exhausted the variety and the joys of life are as old as Adam. But man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried.

Walden.

SEPTEMBER FOURTH

There are nights in this climate of such serene and majestic beauty, so medicinal and fertilizing to the spirit, that methinks a sensitive nature would not devote them to oblivion, and perhaps there is no man but would be better and wiser for spending them out of doors, though he should sleep all the next day to pay for it.

Night and Moonlight.

SEPTEMBER FIFTH

In fact, the deeper you penetrate into the woods, the more intelligent, and, in one sense, less countrified do you find the inhabitants; for always the pioneer has been a traveler, and, to some extent, a man of the world; and, as the distances with which he is familiar are greater, so is his information more general and far reaching than the villagers'.

The Maine Woods.

SEPTEMBER SIXTH

There is in my nature, methinks, a singular yearning toward all wildness. I know of no redeeming qualities in myself but a sincere love for some things, and when I am reproved I fall back on to this ground.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER SEVENTH

Sailors making the land commonly steer either by the wind-mills or the meeting-houses. In the country, we are obliged to steer by the meeting-houses alone. Yet the meeting-house is a kind of wind-mill, which runs one day in seven, turned either by the winds of doctrine or public opinion, or more rarely by the winds of Heaven, where another sort of grist is ground, of which, if it be not all bran or musty, if it be not *plaster*, we trust to make bread of life.

Cape Cod.

SEPTEMBER EIGHTH

A great grief is but sympathy with the soul that disposes events and is as natural as the resin on Arabian trees. . . . The same everlasting serenity will appear in the face of God, and we will not be sorrowful if he is not.

Letters to Various Persons.

SEPTEMBER NINTH

And now that we have returned to the desultory life of the plain, let us endeavor to import a little of that mountain grandeur into it. We will remember within what walls we lie, and understand that this level life too has its summit, and why from the mountain-top the deepest valleys have a tinge of blue.

A Walk to Wachusett.

SEPTEMBER TENTH

Some tumultuous little rill,
Purling round its storied pebble,
Tinkling to the self-same tune,
From September until June,
Which no drought doth e'er enfeeble.

Silent flows the parent stream,
And if rocks do lie below,
Smothers with her waves the din,
As it were a youthful sin,
Just as still, and just as slow.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER ELEVENTH

With the autumn begins in some measure a new spring. The plover is heard whistling high in the air over the dry pastures, the finches flit from tree to tree, the bobolinks and flickers fly in flocks, and the goldfinch rides on the earliest blast, like a winged hyla peeping amid the rustle of the leaves.

Massachusetts Natural History.

SEPTEMBER TWELFTH

It is not worth the while to let our imperfections disturb us always. The conscience really does not, and ought not to, monopolize the whole of

our lives, any more than the heart or the head. It is as liable to disease as any other part.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER THIRTEENTH

Most persons visit the sea-side in warm weather, when fogs are frequent, and the atmosphere is wont to be thick, and the charm of the sea is to some extent lost. But I *suspect* that the fall is the best season, for then the atmosphere is more transparent, and it is a greater pleasure to look out over the sea. The clear and bracing air, and the storms of autumn and winter even, are necessary in order that we may get the impression which the sea is calculated to make.

Cape Cod.

SEPTEMBER FOURTEENTH

For my part, I feel that with regard to Nature I live a sort of border life, on the confines of a world into which I make occasional and transional and transient forays only, and my patriotism and allegiance to the State into whose territories I seem to retreat are those of a moss-trooper.

Walking.

SEPTEMBER FIFTEENTH

Happy we who can bask in this warm September sun, which illumes all creatures, as well when they rest as when they toil, not without a feeling

of gratitude; whose life is as blameless, how blameworthy soever it may be, on the Lord's Mona-day as on his Suna-day.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER SIXTEENTH

If, then, we would indeed restore mankind by truly Indian, botanic, magnetic, or natural means, let us first be as simple and well as Nature ourselves, dispel the clouds which hang over our own brows, and take up a little life into our pores.

Walden.

SEPTEMBER SEVENTEENTH

It is the living spirit of the tree, not its spirit of turpentine, with which I sympathize, and which heals my cuts. It is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still.

The Maine Woods.

SEPTEMBER EIGHTEENTH

Nature strews her nuts and flowers broadcast, and never collects them into heaps. This was the soil it grew in, and this the hour it bloomed in; if sun, wind, and rain came here to cherish and expand the flower, shall not we come here to pluck it?

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER NINETEENTH

No wonder that Alexander carried the Iliad with him on his expeditions in a precious casket. A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself.

Walden.

SEPTEMBER TWENTIETH

As the season advances, and those birds which make us but a passing visit depart, the woods become silent again, and but few feathers ruffle the drowsy air. But the solitary rambler may still find a response and expression for every mood in the depth of the wood.

Massachusetts Natural History.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-FIRST

When, at rare intervals, some thought visits one, as perchance he is walking on a railroad, then indeed the cars go by without his hearing them. But soon, by some inexorable law, our life goes by and the cars return.

Walking.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-SECOND

Art is not tame, and Nature is not wild, in the ordinary sense. A perfect work of man's art would also be wild or natural in a good sense.

Man tames Nature only that he may at last make her more free even than he found her, though he may never yet have succeeded.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-THIRD

When formerly I was looking about to see what I could do for a living, some sad experience in conforming to the wishes of friends being fresh in my mind to tax my ingenuity, I thought often and seriously of picking huckleberries; that surely I could do, and its small profits might suffice, — for my greatest skill has been to want but little, — so little capital it required, so little distraction from my wonted moods, I foolishly thought.

Walden.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH

As I love Nature, as I love singing birds, and gleaming stubble, and flowing rivers, and morning and evening, and summer and winter, I love thee, my Friend.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-FIFTH

By the twenty-fifth of September, the Red Maples generally are beginning to be ripe. Some large ones have been conspicuously changing for a week, and some single trees are now very brilliant. I notice a small one, half a mile off

across a meadow, against the green wood-side there, a far brighter red than the blossoms of any tree in summer, and more conspicuous.

Autumnal Tints.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-SIXTH

The harvest moon had just risen, and its level rays began to light up the forest on our right, while we glided downward in the shade on the same side, against the little breeze that was stirring. The lofty, spiring tops of the spruce and fir were very black against the sky, and more distinct than by day, close bordering this broad avenue on each side; and the beauty of the scene, as the moon rose above the forest, it would not be easy to describe.

The Maine Woods.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-SEVENTH

Even the death of Friends will inspire us as much as their lives. They will leave consolation to the mourners, as the rich leave money to defray the expenses of their funerals, and their memories will be incrusted over with sublime and pleasing thoughts, as their monuments are overgrown with moss.

A Week on the Concord River.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-EIGHTH

When we have returned from the sea-side, we sometimes ask ourselves why we did not spend more time in gazing at the sea; but very soon the traveler does not look at the sea more than at the heavens.

Cape Cod.

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-NINTH

I think that the change to some higher color in a leaf is an evidence that it has arrived at a late and perfect maturity, answering to the maturity of fruits. It is generally the lowest and oldest leaves which change first. But as the perfect winged and usually bright-colored insect is short-lived, so the leaves ripen but to fall.

Autumnal Tints.

SEPTEMBER THIRTIETH

What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before you, and walk on into futurity.

Walden.

OCTOBER

* * *

OCTOBER FIRST

I AM astonished at the singular pertinacity and endurance of our lives. The miracle is, that what is *is*, when it is so difficult, if not impossible, for anything else to be; that we walk on in our particular paths so far, before we fall on death and fate, merely because we must walk in some path; that every man can get a living, and so few can do any more. So much only can I accomplish ere health and strength are gone, and yet this suffices.

A Week on the Concord River.

OCTOBER SECOND

But of much more importance than a knowledge of the names and distinctions of color is the joy and exhilaration which these colored leaves excite. Already these brilliant trees throughout the street, without any more variety, are at least equal to an annual festival and holiday, or a week of such.

Autumnal Tints.

OCTOBER THIRD

The true man of science will know Nature better by his finer organization; he will smell, taste, see, hear, feel, better than other men. His will be a deeper and finer experience. We do not learn by inference and deduction, and the application of mathematics to philosophy, but by direct intercourse and sympathy.

Massachusetts Natural History.

OCTOBER FOURTH

The tops of mountains are among the unfinished parts of the globe, whither it is a slight insult to the gods to climb and pry into their secrets, and try their effect on our humanity. Only daring and insolent men, perchance, go there. Simple races, as savages, do not climb mountains, — their tops are sacred and mysterious tracts never visited by them. Pomola is always angry with those who climb to the summit of Ktaadn.

The Maine Woods.

OCTOBER FIFTH

Some hours seem not to be occasion for any deed, but for resolves to draw breath in. We do not directly go about the execution of the purpose that thrills us, but shut our doors behind us, and ramble with prepared mind, as if the half were already done.

A Week on the Concord River.

OCTOBER SIXTH

Now, too, the first of October, or later, the Elms are at the height of their autumnal beauty, great brownish-yellow masses, warm from their September oven, hanging over the highway. Their leaves are perfectly ripe. I wonder if there is any answering ripeness in the lives of the men who live beneath them.

Autumnal Tints.

OCTOBER SEVENTH

This life is not for complaint, but for satisfaction.

Letters to Various Persons.

OCTOBER EIGHTH

The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things.

Walden.

OCTOBER NINTH

Every wild-apple shrub excites our expectation thus, somewhat as every wild child. It is, perhaps, a prince in disguise. What a lesson to man! So are human beings, referred to the highest standard, the celestial fruit which they suggest and aspire to bear, browsed on by fate; and only the most persistent and strongest genius defends itself and prevails, sends a tender scion upward at last, and drops its perfect fruit on the ungrateful earth. Poets and philosophers and

statesmen thus spring up in the country pastures, and outlast the hosts of unoriginal men.

Wild Apples.

OCTOBER TENTH

Columbus felt the westward tendency more strongly than any before. He obeyed it, and found a New World for Castile and Leon. The herd of men in those days scented fresh pastures from afar.

Walking.

OCTOBER ELEVENTH

The child should have the advantage of ignorance as well as of knowledge, and is fortunate if he gets his share of neglect and exposure.

A Week on the Concord River.

OCTOBER TWELFTH

Individuals, like nations, must have suitable broad and natural boundaries, even a considerable neutral ground, between them. I have found it a singular luxury to talk across the pond to a companion on the opposite side.

Walden.

OCTOBER THIRTEENTH

Look at yonder swamp of Maples mixed with Pines, at the base of a Pine-clad hill, a quarter of a mile off, so that you get the full effect of

the bright colors, without detecting the imperfections of the leaves, and see their yellow, scarlet, and crimson fires, of all tints, mingled and contrasted with the green.

Autumnal Tints.

OCTOBER FOURTEENTH

The late walker or sailor, in the October evenings, may hear the murmurings of the snipe, circling over the meadows, the most spirit-like sound in Nature; and still later in the autumn, when the frosts have tinged the leaves, a solitary loon pays a visit to our retired ponds, where he may lurk undisturbed till the season of moulting is passed, making the woods ring with his wild laughter.

Massachusetts Natural History.

OCTOBER FIFTEENTH

For this is the secret of successful sauntering. He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all; but the saunterer, in the good sense, is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea.

Walking.

OCTOBER SIXTEENTH

In the hues of October sunsets, we see the portals to other mansions than those which we occupy, not far off geographically.

A Week on the Concord River.

OCTOBER SEVENTEENTH

Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me.

Walden.

OCTOBER EIGHTEENTH

Cape Cod is the bared and bended arm of Massachusetts: the shoulder is at Buzzard's Bay; the elbow, or crazy-bone, at Cape Mallebarre; the wrist at Truro; and the sandy fist at Provincetown, — behind which the State stands on her guard, with her back to the Green Mountains, and her feet planted on the floor of the ocean, like an athlete protecting her Bay, — boxing with northeast storms, and, ever and anon, heaving up her Atlantic adversary from the lap of

earth, — ready to thrust forward her other fist, which keeps guard the while upon her breast at Cape Ann.

Cape Cod.

OCTOBER NINETEENTH

It is a great pleasure to escape sometimes from the restless class of Reformers. What if these grievances exist? So do you and I.

A Week on the Concord River.

OCTOBER TWENTIETH

How beautiful, when a whole tree is like one great scarlet fruit full of ripe juices, every leaf, from lowest limb to topmost spire, all aglow, especially if you look toward the sun! What more remarkable object can there be in the landscape? Visible for miles, too fair to be believed. If such a phenomenon occurred but once, it would be handed down by tradition to posterity, and get into the mythology at last.

Autumnal Tints.

OCTOBER TWENTY-FIRST

The works of the great poets have never yet been read by mankind, for only great poets can read them. They have only been read as the multitude read the stars, at most astrologically, not astronomically.

Walden.

OCTOBER TWENTY-SECOND

One who pressed forward incessantly and never rested from his labors, who grew fast and made infinite demands on life, would always find himself in a new country or wilderness, and surrounded by the raw material of life. He would be climbing over the prostrate stems of primitive forest-trees.

Walking.

OCTOBER TWENTY-THIRD

I do not see what the Puritans did at this season, when the Maples blaze out in scarlet. They certainly could not have worshiped in groves then. Perhaps that is what they built meeting-houses and fenced them round with horsesheds for.

Autumnal Tints.

OCTOBER TWENTY-FOURTH

The New Testament is remarkable for its pure morality; the best of the Hindoo Scripture, for its pure intellectuality.

A Week on the Concord River.

OCTOBER TWENTY-FIFTH

To a philosopher all *news*, as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea. Yet not a few are greedy after this gossip.

Walden.

OCTOBER TWENTY-SIXTH

By the twenty-sixth of October the large Scarlet Oaks are in their prime, when other Oaks are usually withered. They have been kindling their fires for a week past, and now generally burst into a blaze.

Autumnal Tints.

OCTOBER TWENTY-SEVENTH

It was worth the while to lie down in a country where you could afford such great fires; that was one whole side, and the bright side of our world.

The Maine Woods.

OCTOBER TWENTY-EIGHTH

We are sometimes made aware of a kindness long passed, and realize that there have been times when our friends' thoughts of us were of so pure and lofty a character that they passed over us like the winds of heaven unnoticed; when they treated us not as what we were, but as what we aspired to be.

A Week on the Concord River.

OCTOBER TWENTY-NINTH

Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in

trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing.

Walden.

OCTOBER THIRTIETH

October is the month for painted leaves. Their rich glow now flashes round the world. As fruits and leaves and the day itself acquire a bright tint just before they fall, so the year near its setting. October is its sunset sky; November the later twilight.

Autumnal Tints.

OCTOBER THIRTY-FIRST

I am the autumnal sun,
With autumn gales my race is run;
When will the hazel put forth its flowers,
Or the grape ripen under my bowers?
When will the harvest or the hunter's moon,
Turn my midnight into mid-noon?
I am all sere and yellow,
And to my core mellow.
The mast is dropping within my woods,
The winter is lurking within my moods,
And the rustling of the withered leaf
Is the constant music of my grief.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER FIRST

IT is not enough that we are truthful; we must cherish and carry out high purposes to be truthful about.

Letters to Various Persons.

NOVEMBER SECOND

It is pleasant to walk over the beds of these fresh, crisp, and rustling leaves. How beautifully they go to their graves! how gently lay themselves down and turn to mould! — painted of a thousand hues, and fit to make the beds of us living. So they troop to their last resting-place, light and frisky.

Autumnal Tints.

NOVEMBER THIRD

There is a peculiar interest belonging to the still later flowers, which abide with us the approach of winter. There is something witch-like in the appearance of the witch-hazel, which blossoms late in October and in November, with its irregular and angular spray and petals like furies' hair, or small ribbon streamers.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER FOURTH

Standing quite alone, far in the forest, while the wind is shaking down snow from the trees, and leaving the only human tracks behind us, we find our reflections of a richer variety than the life of cities.

A Winter Walk.

NOVEMBER FIFTH

Hardly a man takes a half hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed.

Walden.

NOVEMBER SIXTH

A mountain-chain determines many things for the statesman and philosopher. The improvements of civilization rather creep along its sides than cross its summit. How often is it a barrier to prejudice and fanaticism?

A Walk to Wachusett.

NOVEMBER SEVENTH

Look up at the tree-tops and see how finely Nature finishes off her work there. See how the pines spire without end higher and higher,

and make a graceful fringe to the earth. And who shall count the finer cobwebs that soar and float away from their utmost tops, and the myriad insects that dodge between them.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER EIGHTH

The Jesuit missionaries used to say, that, in their journeys with the Indians in Canada, they lay on a bed which had never been shaken up since the creation, unless by earthquakes.

The Maine Woods.

NOVEMBER NINTH

A queen might be proud to walk where these gallant trees have spread their bright cloaks in the mud. I see wagons roll over them as a shadow or a reflection, and the drivers heed them just as little as they did their shadows before.

Autumnal Tints.

NOVEMBER TENTH

What we call knowledge is often our positive ignorance; ignorance our negative knowledge.

Walking.

NOVEMBER ELEVENTH

Silence is the universal refuge, the sequel to all dull discourses and all foolish acts, a balm to our every chagrin, as welcome after satiety as

after disappointment; that background which the painter may not daub, be he master or bungler, and which, however awkward a figure he may have made in the foreground, remains ever our inviolable asylum, where no indignity can assail, no personality disturb us.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER TWELFTH

All health and success does me good, however far off and withdrawn it may appear; all disease and failure helps to make me sad and does me evil, however much sympathy it may have with me or I with it.

Walden.

NOVEMBER THIRTEENTH

All apples are good in November. Those which the farmer leaves out as unsalable, and unpalatable to those who frequent the markets, are choicest fruit to the walker. But it is remarkable that the wild apple, which I praise as so spirited and racy when eaten in the fields or woods, being brought into the house, has frequently a harsh and crabbed taste.

Wild Apples.

NOVEMBER FOURTEENTH

Most go in and shut their doors, thinking that bleak and colorless November has already come,

when some of the most brilliant and memorable colors are not yet lit.

Autumnal Tints.

NOVEMBER FIFTEENTH

A town is saved, not more by the righteous men in it than by the woods and swamps that surround it. A township where one primitive forest waves above, while another primitive forest rots below, — such a town is fitted to raise not only corn and potatoes, but poets and philosophers for the coming ages. In such a soil grew Homer and Confucius and the rest, and out of such a wilderness comes the Reformer eating locusts and wild honey.

Walking.

NOVEMBER SIXTEENTH

Read the best books first, or you may not have a chance to read them at all.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER SEVENTEENTH

Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird,
Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;

By night star-veiling, and by day
Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,
And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame.

Walden.

NOVEMBER EIGHTEENTH

I think that I may venture to say that every white-pine cone that falls to the earth naturally in this town, before opening and losing its seeds, and almost every pitch-pine one that falls at all, is cut off by a squirrel, and they begin to pluck them long before they are ripe, so that when the crop of white-pine cones is a small one, as it commonly is, they cut off thus almost every one of these before it fairly ripens.

The Succession of Forest Trees.

NOVEMBER NINETEENTH

Every sunset which I witness inspires me with the desire to go to a West as distant and as fair as that into which the sun goes down. He appears to migrate westward daily, and tempt us to follow him. He is a Great Western Pioneer whom the nations follow.

Walking.

NOVEMBER TWENTIETH

A perfectly healthy sentence, it is true, is extremely rare. For the most part we miss the hue and fragrance of the thought; as if we could

be satisfied with the dews of the morning or evening without their colors, or the heavens without their azure. The most attractive sentences are, perhaps, not the wisest, but the surest and roundest.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-FIRST

I believe that men are generally still a little afraid of the dark, though the witches are all hung, and Christianity and candles have been introduced.

Walden.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-SECOND

The civilized man not only clears the land permanently to a great extent, and cultivates open fields, but he tames and cultivates to a certain extent the forest itself. By his mere presence, almost, he changes the nature of the trees as no other creature does.

The Maine Woods.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-THIRD

Let us see if we cannot stay here where He has put us, on his own conditions. Does not his law reach as far as his light? The expedients of the nations clash with one another, only the absolutely right is expedient for all.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH

Books, the oldest and the best, stand naturally and rightfully on the shelves of every cottage. They have no cause of their own to plead, but while they enlighten and sustain the reader his common sense will not refuse them. Their authors are a natural and irresistible aristocracy in every society, and, more than kings or emperors, exert an influence on mankind.

Walden.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-FIFTH

I trust that we shall be more imaginative, that our thoughts will be clearer, fresher, and more ethereal, as our sky, — our understanding more comprehensive and broader, like our plains, — our intellect generally on a grander scale, like our thunder and lightning, our rivers and mountains and forests, — and our hearts shall even correspond in breadth and depth and grandeur to our inland seas.

Walking.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-SIXTH

Occasionally, when threading the woods in the fall, you will hear a sound as if some one had broken a twig, and, looking up, see a jay pecking at an acorn, or you will see a flock of them at once about it, in the top of an oak, and hear them break them off.

The Succession of Forest Trees.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-SEVENTH

How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book.

Walden.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-EIGHTH

We do not wish for Friends to feed and clothe our bodies, — neighbors are kind enough for that, — but to do the like office to our spirits. For this few are rich enough, however well disposed they may be.

A Week on the Concord River.

NOVEMBER TWENTY-NINTH

Though winter is represented in the almanac as an old man, facing the wind and sleet, and drawing his cloak about him, we rather think of him as a merry wood-chopper, and warm-blooded youth, as blithe as summer.

A Winter Walk.

NOVEMBER THIRTIETH

We know not yet what we have done, still less what we are doing. Wait till evening, and other parts of our day's work will shine than we had thought at noon, and we shall discover the real purport of our toil. As when the farmer has reached the end of the furrow and looks back, he can best tell where the pressed earth shines most.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER

DECEMBER FIRST

THE unconsciousness of man is the consciousness of God.

Deep are the foundations of sincerity. Even stone walls have their foundation below the frost.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER SECOND

But I would say to my fellows, once for all, As long as possible live free and uncommitted. It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail.

Walden.

DECEMBER THIRD

Out on the silent pond straightway
The restless ice doth crack,
And pond sprites merry gambols play
Amid the deafening rack.

Eager I hasten to the vale,
As if I heard brave news,
How Nature held high festival,
Which it were hard to lose.

Excursions.

DECEMBER FOURTH

What a coarse and imperfect use Indians and hunters make of Nature! No wonder that their race is so soon exterminated. I already, and for weeks afterward, felt my nature the coarser for this part of my woodland experience, and was reminded that our life should be lived as tenderly and daintily as one would pluck a flower.

The Maine Woods.

DECEMBER FIFTH

Here is no apology for neglecting to do many things from a sense of our incapacity, — for what deed does not fall maimed and imperfect from our hands? — but only a warning to bungle less.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER SIXTH

The bottom of the sea is strewn with anchors, some deeper and some shallower, and alternately covered and uncovered by the sand, perchance with a small length of iron cable still attached, — to which where is the other end? So many unconcluded tales to be continued another time.

Cape Cod.

DECEMBER SEVENTH

The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

Walden.

DECEMBER EIGHTH

Sometimes our fate grows too homely and familiarly serious ever to be cruel. Consider how for three months the human destiny is wrapped in furs.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER NINTH

Talk of burning your smoke after the wood has been consumed! There is a far more important and warming heat, commonly lost, which precedes the burning of the wood. It is the smoke of industry, which is incense.

Letters to Various Persons.

DECEMBER TENTH

No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch in his clothes; yet I am sure that there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched, clothes than to have a sound conscience.

Walden.

DECEMBER ELEVENTH

Some minds are as little logical or argumentative as Nature; they can offer no reason or "guess," but they exhibit the solemn and incontrovertible fact. If a historical question arises, they cause the tombs to be opened.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER TWELFTH

I must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe. And that way the nation is moving, and I may say that mankind progress from east to west.

Excursions.

DECEMBER THIRTEENTH

Likewise we look in vain, east or west over the earth, to find the perfect man; but each represents only some particular excellence.

The Landlord.

DECEMBER FOURTEENTH

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction or his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him;

or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings.

Walden.

DECEMBER FIFTEENTH

Talk of mysteries! — Think of our life in Nature, — daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, — rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the *solid* earth! the *actual* world! the *common sense! Contact! Contact! Who* are we? *where* are we?

The Maine Woods.

DECEMBER SIXTEENTH

Some poems are for holidays only. They are polished and sweet, but it is the sweetness of sugar, and not such as toil gives to sour bread. The breath with which the poet utters his verse must be that by which he lives.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER SEVENTEENTH

To him who contemplates a trait of natural beauty no harm nor disappointment can come. The doctrines of despair, of spiritual or political tyranny or servitude, were never taught by such as shared the serenity of Nature. Surely good courage will not flag here on the Atlantic border, as long as we are flanked by the Fur Countries.

There is enough in that sound to cheer one under any circumstances. The spruce, the hemlock, and the pine will not countenance despair.

Massachusetts Natural History.

DECEMBER EIGHTEENTH

Be sure that you give the poor the aid they most need, though it be your example which leaves them far behind. If you give money, spend yourself with it, and do not merely abandon it to them.

Walden.

DECEMBER NINETEENTH

A truly good book is something as natural, and as unexpectedly and unaccountably fair and perfect, as a wild flower discovered on the prairies of the West or in the jungles of the East.

Excursions.

DECEMBER TWENTIETH

Who would neglect the least celestial sound,
Or faintest light that falls on earthly ground,
If he could know it one day would be found
That star in Cygnus whither we are bound,
And pale our sun with heavenly radiance round?

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER TWENTY-FIRST

Up goes the smoke as silently and naturally as the vapor exhales from the leaves, and as busy disposing itself in wreathes as the housewife on the hearth below. It is a hieroglyphic of man's life, and suggests more intimate and important things than the boiling of a pot.

A Winter Walk.

DECEMBER TWENTY-SECOND

This further experience also I gained. I said to myself, I will not plant beans and corn with so much industry another summer, but such seeds, if the seed is not lost, as sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like, and see if they will not grow in this soil, even with less toil and manurance, and sustain me, for surely it has not been exhausted for these crops.

Walden.

DECEMBER TWENTY-THIRD

It would really be no small advantage if every college were thus located at the base of a mountain, as good at least as one well-endowed professorship. It were as well to be educated in the shadow of a mountain as in more classical shades.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH

If you would feel the full force of a tempest, take up your residence on the top of Mount Washington, or at the Highland Light, in Truro.

Cape Cod.

DECEMBER TWENTY-FIFTH

Our life without love is like coke and ashes. Men may be pure as alabaster and Parian marble, elegant as a Tuscan villa, sublime as Niagara, and yet if there is no milk mingled with the wine at their entertainments, better is the hospitality of Goths and Vandals.

A Week on the Concord River.

DECEMBER TWENTY-SIXTH

In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick, too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.

Walden.

DECEMBER TWENTY-SEVENTH

But through all this dreariness we seemed to have a pure and unqualified strain of eternal melody, for always the same strain which is a dirge to one household is a morning song of rejoicing to another.

Cape Cod.

DECEMBER TWENTY-EIGHTH

It is true, we are but faint-hearted crusaders, even the walkers, nowadays, who undertake no persevering, never-ending enterprises. Our expeditions are but tours, and come round again at evening to the old hearth-side from which we set out. Half the walk is but retracing our steps.

Excursions.

DECEMBER TWENTY-NINTH

The true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and indescribable as the tints of morning or evening. It is a little star-dust caught, a segment of the rainbow which I have clutched.

Walden.

DECEMBER THIRTIETH

Why should not we, who have renounced the king's authority, have our national preserves, where no villages need be destroyed, in which the bear and panther, and some even of the hunter race, may still exist, and not be "civilized off the face of the earth," — our forests, not to hold the king's game merely, but to hold and preserve the king himself also, the lord of creation, — not for idle sport or food, but for inspiration and our own true recreation? or shall we, like villains, grub them all up, poaching on our own national domains?

The Maine Woods.

So we saunter toward the Holy Land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bank-side in autumn.

Excursions.

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